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Background Information on Late Potatoes

To: FSA, Extension, AAA information and administrative personnel in Michigan, Wisconsin, Maine, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

Use: To assist in last minute drive to increase late potato acreage.

THE PROBLEM

Unless farmers in key States of Michigan, Wisconsin, Maine, Minnesota and North Dakota meet their production goals for late potatoes, the Nation may face a shortage of potatoes late in 1944 and early 1945.

The acreage intended for the 1944 late crop - as shown by the March report of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics - indicates that four of these states will fall below their goals.

Intended late potato acreage in the four States follows:

State	1943 :Planted Acreage:	1944 :Goal:	1944 :Prospective:	1944 :Goal:	Prospective as percent of 1943
	(Thousand Acres)				(Percent)
Michigan	220	245	194	79	88
Wisconsin	190	205	165	80	87
Minnesota	261	261	224	86	86
North Dakota	182	200	164	82	90

Although farmers in Maine indicated on March 1 that their potato goals would be met, later reports indicate that Maine may plant less acreage than called for in the goals.

The acreage already planted or in prospect for the early and intermediate potato crops (assuming average yields) will produce about 9 percent more than the goals for these crops. If yields are average or above, we will continue to have abundant supplies of these potatoes through the spring and summer months. Early potatoes cannot be stored readily, however, and must be consumed or used within a short time after harvest.

Last year a large acreage of late potatoes, coupled with an unusually favorable growing season, resulted in the largest production on record. While supplies of potatoes are abundant at present, it is urgent that 1944 goals for late potatoes be met to avert a possible shortage next winter and spring.

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In any year, particularly in wartime, it is less risky to deal with a surplus instead of a shortage in a particular food. Moreover, with the experience gained in disposing of the bumper crop of 1943 potatoes, private trade channels and Government agencies now have the "know how" to utilize old and provide new outlets for any surpluses which might develop. Growers should be advised, however, that surpluses will be shipped on an allocated basis in order to remove them out of surplus areas and to provide plants with potatoes on an orderly schedule. Among uses which have been expanded recently for potatoes are dehydration for feed and alcohol and potato flour.

WHAT IS BEING DONE

An aggressive informational and educational campaign now is under way in the four low-acreage States. This campaign should be intensified from now until the goals are met, or until planting season is over.

APPEALS TO GROWERS

1. No one food crop is more important than potatoes. The potato "famine" of March and April, 1943, is still fresh in the minds of many people. Recurrence of a potato shortage would be a blow to home front morale, so important in prosecuting the war, and would place an unnecessary strain on other U.S. food supplies.

It is much better to have too many than too few potatoes to meet needs. In view of the lessons learned last year in handling a surplus of potatoes, growers can produce this year with assurance that the crop will be managed efficiently and used advantageously.

2. Whatever assurance on labor for planting and harvesting potatoes that can be given on the basis of plans and arrangements by the Extension Service should be circulated as widely as possible.
3. The potato price support program for this year already has been announced. The authority and the funds for putting it into effect have been granted by Congress. It is important that all growers know the provisions of this program as it applies to local areas, so they may have the assurance that they will receive fair prices for their potatoes.